

Report
of the
House Interim Committee
on
Education

December 2, 2013

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December 2, 2013

Honorable Tim Jones
Speaker of the House
Room 308 Capitol
Jefferson City MO 65101

Dear Mr. Speaker:

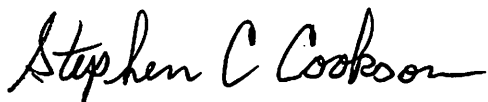
Pursuant to your July 2, 2013, directive, the House Interim Committee on Education has held its meetings, including travel to eleven sites, some of which legislative committees rarely visit.

The Committee was aware from the outset that its task was large. The Committee attempted to get beyond the usual, predictable patterns of a committee and sought out opinions from all sectors. Most importantly, the Committee diligently sought feedback from people who rarely travel to Jefferson City. The Committee appreciated the chance to get fresh ideas, and its experience indicates that the people who attended the hearings were grateful to have their opinions asked for.

The Committee wishes to thank the representatives who were not members of the committee who attended its meetings and added greatly to its understanding. The Committee appreciates the group of superintendents that attended multiple meetings and acted as a group of advisors filling in the practical details and history of the issues that were discussed.

The Committee is grateful for the chance to investigate these crucial issues and is pleased to submit the attached report.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen C Cookson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Representative Steve Cookson, Chair
House Interim Committee on Education

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COMMITTEE PROCESS

Speaker Tim Jones appointed the House Interim Committee on July 2, 2103. On July 11, 2013, the Committee held its organizational meeting. Commissioner of Education Chris NiCastro was invited to update the Committee members on the status of several education issues, a briefing that was especially welcome to several members of the Committee who are not members of an education-related committee, despite their interest in education.

A list of topics that Committee members believed would be of interest to citizens and of use for possible development of future legislation was compiled from members' suggestions.

At that meeting, the Chair and Vice Chair shared their vision of a different kind of interim committee with a broad scope and high aspirations of getting in touch with concerned citizens who did not usually make the trip to Jefferson City to testify on issues. Getting outside the sound-bite environment of the Capitol was crucial for getting unfiltered opinions.

Under the leadership of the Vice Chair, a subcommittee was formed to plan a travel schedule intended to get the Committee out into communities that might go for years without hosting a legislative committee, also with stops in areas where urgent issues were boiling. The subcommittee located venues in higher education institutions to make it easier for students to attend. An ambitious schedule of "two-a-days" was created, with an afternoon and an evening meeting on most days, spread across a week each in late September and late October.

The Chair strongly advocated an unusual twist—for the most part, the Committee members traveled together on a bus. The travel time allowed for discussion and reflection. At the Committee's September 10 meeting in Jefferson City, tour plans were finalized.

At each hearing, the Chair asked a Committee member to take the gavel and run the meeting. Audience members were asked to sign up to testify and indicate what topic they would be speaking on. Topics were not limited to the Committee list, but at most meetings, testimony was taken first on the listed topics and then opened to other topics.

At many meetings, a second round of testimony occurred when Committee members asked earlier witnesses to come back to the microphone and explain further. Many of these evolved into genuine conversations between Committee members and not only witnesses, but also audience members who had not testified, but then joined in the discussion.

FINDINGS

The Committee's findings cover the topics discussed at its hearings. The Committee believes that every child deserves a quality education in a quality school or quality school district.

Some findings are descriptions of the current status of an issue, while some also contain recommendations for legislative action. Topics listed first are those for which action is recommended.

Transfers from unaccredited districts.

- A. Some consensus exists on changes to the financial aspects of the transfer program required under 167.131, RSMo.:
 - 1. The formula for tuition, which is the same as the K-8 district formula, should take into consideration that transfer students are, for the most part, filling available seats. With a K-8 district, the assumption is that building funds are necessary to permanently support a high school building in the receiving district. A more uniform calculation of tuition would also help eliminate penny-wise and pound-foolish decisions such as selecting a more distant district to receive students based on a drastically lower tuition. At this point, with large-scale transfers in process and pending, it is clear that the sending district cannot make fiscal plans with any level of confidence when tuition can vary by nearly 100%..
 - 2. Receiving districts need some control over their circumstances, such as designating available seats, based on a consistent rationale.
- B. Consensus also exists on the idea of shared responsibility for academic improvement. The state has many good educational leaders, and the large urban areas are full of potential resources for mentoring staff, supplementing resources, and critiquing new approaches. Developing specific designs for unique circumstances, which is now possible as a result of Senate Bill 125 (2013), should have better results than the old "one-size-fits-most but not all" approach the state coped with for the last fifteen years since SB 781 in 1998.
- C. The need to intervene appropriately before a district becomes unaccredited was another area of consensus. Academic and fiscal guidance, if not formal oversight, as appropriate to the circumstances, should be pushed up to the provisional accreditation level.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends a statutory change that would, at a minimum, limit tuition to a single amount to make planning easier and that would prescribe the scope of control over the number and conditions for acceptance of transfer students. One possible tuition formula is derived from the funding formula (ADA X SAT X receiving DVM - formula adjustment percentage + Prop C).

Early childhood education.

The most enthusiastically recommended and most often mentioned possibility for long term improvement of academic achievement was early childhood education. Some superintendents testified that they would be willing to trade twelfth grade for preschool. The committee was cautioned that quality preschool programs are necessary. Fortunately, quality programs exist both inside the school system and outside it. Districts with good private preschool resources see the benefits of sharing information and expectations with private providers. While some districts can devote Title I funds to preschool, other districts fund it with local money. The state legislature now needs to have a conversation about the best way to implement early childhood education in more districts, especially those districts that are struggling.

Recommendation: The Interim Committee was lucky to have the House Budget Chair and the Education Appropriation Chair as members. Anticipating a better-than-usual revenue estimate, the budget and appropriations committees will need to determine the scope of any possible increase and decide if existing methods of fund delivery are sufficient. When a consensus develops on the extent of available funds, it may be that statutory changes will be needed.

School calendar and extended learning.

Students do not learn at the same rate. Students are not equally ready for the concepts they are introduced to in any given grade. Sadly, the students with the biggest learning gaps are the ones who are hurt the most by regression when not in school. A longer day or a calendar that minimizes out-of-school periods so that a student does not have to spend the first six weeks of the fall term making up ground lost over the twelve weeks of summer vacation can be a crucial part of getting to better academic achievement for all students.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends an overall increase in learning time for every student, especially for struggling students and struggling districts.

Career and technical education (CTE).

Some CTE teachers and students, particularly those in vocational agricultural programs, spoke of their concern that the lack of specific reference to their programs in MSIP standards equates to lack of recognition of the programs' value. Several FFA students spoke movingly of how the programs have affected their lives. The committee remains hopeful that the changes to CTE governance and communication structures in SB 9 (2013) will remedy the situation. Career and technical education is the state's best channel for providing the foundation for a good job that might not require a bachelor's degree. Programs such as Pathways to Prosperity and Connections exemplify the state's commitment. Ideally, everyone leaving high school will have at least two credentials. In the case of most CTE, the credential would be a high school diploma and an industry-recognized credential.

Wraparound services.

Services to address problems such as hunger, bad vision, and medical conditions that hinder academic achievement can make an enormous difference in a student's life. The Vision Intervention Program, discussed in Poplar Bluff, is an excellent example. These programs are not a panacea; to be most effective, they must be fine-tuned to each district's circumstances. In many districts, opportunities exist because a principal, staff member, or district patron persists in connecting resources to needs or vice versa. Good leadership brings everybody to the table, because everybody is affected, whether directly or not.

Parent-community-school relationships and transparency.

Good schools reach out to the community and parents. Some parents have had bad experiences with schools and are skeptical; some parents have obstacles such as inflexible work times and lack of transportation that make it hard for them to participate in school events. Regardless, schools that meet parents more than halfway usually get better results. Good relationships conquer adversity.

Virtual learning.

Virtual learning has changed in several dimensions since the creation of the MoVIP program in 2007. School districts may offer their own on-line learning, participate in MoVIP, or buy services from a contractor. Virtual learning is a blessing for students who are homebound or who, for whatever reason, find full-day attendance at a specific physical site an obstacle. As Missouri strives to individualize learning to increase student engagement, virtual learning becomes a major piece of that individualization. Similarly, as the state moves towards a proficiency-based system to increase efficiency, virtual learning will play an important role. The state's job here is to safeguard the quality of the instruction and curriculum while providing access to more students for more subjects.

Educator preparation.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has raised the bar for teacher education and principal/administrator development programs, requiring more rigorous standards. One common thread in the testimony about teacher preparation expressed by higher education institutions has been concern over the impact of changing standards on the students who are currently in the pipeline. Students who entered under the older standards are being encouraged to take assessments early enough in their work to provide maximum flexibility. Changing teacher preparation standards goes hand-in-hand with changing student standards and assessments, and evaluations.

Educator evaluation.

Some teachers testified that they did not object to being evaluated on their impact on students if

the evaluations were consistently and fairly administered. Much discussion centered on the training of evaluators, and different demands on the principal's time. One principal testified that she was spending more time in the classroom now, but it was more effectively spent. More walk-throughs with quick feedback work better than observing a teacher once for an hour. Teachers want useful feedback, not a checklist. Developing the capacity of principals and others to provide useful feedback is a priority.

Tenure.

Some younger teachers asserted that they, as a generation, feel less strongly that tenure is a cherished protection. Some superintendents testified that the current tenure law does not make it impossible to remove an ineffective teacher, but makes it more likely that minimal performance may be tolerated longer. Some testimony indicated that the current tenure law is satisfactory for maintaining the status quo. Ideally, ineffective teachers are coached into being more effective or coached out of the profession. Tenure has historically been linked with getting into the profession; however, the standards for staying in the profession and for continuous improvement of performance are a newer development.

Common Core standards and assessments.

The most heated testimony heard by the committee concerned the Common Core state standards initiative. It was apparent that a disconnect has occurred in two areas—the first, between some districts and some of their patrons, and the second, between the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the average Missouri parent. The Missouri Constitution gives oversight of education to the State Board of Education, not to the General Assembly, although the General Assembly is charged with funding education. DESE has been open about their standards process, but this information has not always filtered out of the educational world to the general public. In some instances when it has, it has not been accurately portrayed. The Committee remains concerned over the issue and will be watchful to protect the openness of all processes related to it, especially the statutory protection for curriculum as a local decision (160.514, subsection 3).

School safety.

The committee did not receive much testimony on school safety, despite a number of recent incidents of school violence in other states. The Committee's hope is that the lack of testimony results from most parents believing their children are safe in the state's schools.

TIMELINE

The chart below represents a staged approach to resolving some of the state's most pressing educational issues:

Short-term measures:

- Transfer clarification
- Extended learning time/calendar
- Educator preparation and evaluation

Midterm measures:

- Virtual learning
- Wraparound services
- Tenure

Long-term measures:

- Early childhood education

LIST OF MEETINGS AND WITNESSES

The following information was transcribed from witness forms. If a person listed a business affiliation on the form, it is included.

September 23, 2013

St. Charles Community College

Dr. Elena Amirault, Hazelwood School District
John Callahan
Katherine Casas, Children's Education Council of Missouri
James H. Clark
Kenneth Cook
Gary Cunningham
Alison Gee, Parents as Teachers National Center
Jerry Hobbs, Cole County R-1 School District
Marty Hodits
Dr. Art McCoy
Martha Ott, League of Women Voters of Missouri
Carl Peterson
Joy Rouse
Roger Russell
Paul R. Schroeder
James V. Shuls
Dr. Scott Spurgeon
Christine White, Spirit Family Tree-Excellence in Education

St. Louis Community College - Meramec

Kelvin Adams, St. Louis Public Schools
Mathieu Agee
Eric Bridges
Debbie Caldwell-Miller
Jennifer Condren
Kenneth Cook, Malden R-1 School District
Jane Cunningham
Susan Donnell
Franc Flotron, K-12, Inc.
Mike Fulton, Pattonville School District
Holly Garrett
Anne Gassel
Liz Gibbons, Character Plus
Sandra Goforth
Bill Haas
Dryver Henderson, Normandy Schools Town Hall Organization

Jerry Hobbs, Cole County R-1 School District
Grace Hogan
Kenneth J. Holzapfel
David Jackson, St. Louis Board of Education
Lisa A. Jones
Anisha Jones-Matthews
Anne Kessen Lowell
Diane Kline, Character Plus
Dr. Art McCoy
Pat McHugh
Ty McNichols, Normandy School District
Forrest W. Miller, Royale Orleans
Paul Morris
Adolphus M. Pruitt, St. Louis NAACP
Carolyn Randazzo, Metropolitan Congregation United (MCU)
Terry (Theresa) Reger
Mary Beth Reynolds, League of Women Voters of St. Louis
Brenda Rupp
Steven Shaw
Earl Simms, Missouri Charter Public School Association
Rick Sullivan, St. Louis Public Schools
Jennifer Trotter-Rucker
Evelyn Teason
Susan Turk
Angel Williams, Metropolitan Congregation United (MCU)

Delivered Written Testimony

Lajunta Brown/Asia Bell
Deborah Cannady
Diane McCrary
Fatama Mooner
Denise Morehouse
Jawana Williams

September 24, 2013

Southeast Missouri State University

Barbara Barnard
Fred Barnard
Esther H. Bohnert
Brain Bollmann
Ellen Sue Brockett
Kenneth Cook, Superintendent, Malden R-1 School District

Janet D. Farrar
Michael Graham
Nancy Hale
Jeri Kay Hardy, Junior/Senior High School Principal, Malden R-1 School District
David A. Larson
Julie A. Ray
Linda Rental
Diana Rogers-Adkinson
Marla Swindell, Academic Coordinator, Malden R-1 School District
Mark Van Zandt, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Delivered Written Testimony
Ty Boyd

Three Rivers Community College
Matt Bedell, The Landing–Current River
Jerry Hobbs, Cole County R-1 School District
Chris Hon, Poplar Bluff R-1 School District
Sheri Kennedy
Joseph Knodell, Missouri Education Reform Council
Peg Nicholson, Save Our Schools Missouri
Dr. Devin Stephenson
Richard Sullivan, East Carter R-2 School District

September 25, 2013

College of the Ozarks
Mary R. Byrne
Jeffrey D. Chappell, Thayer R-II School District
Douglas Clark
Jordan Coday, Seymour FFA/ Ag Ed Programs
Pamela Cooper
Monica Horton
Haven Howard, Concerned Women for America
John Lilly
Mark Mayo
Cynthia Mulhall
Jerold Carless Osbourn, Kirbyville R-VI School District
Scott Rodgers
Herbert L. Sisco
Kevin Weigler

Missouri Southern State University
Melissa Braun

Jill Carter
Kris Esch
Debbie Fort
Lawrence Frencken
Cory Garr
David Harrington
Jerry Hobbs, Cole County R-1 Schol District
Jasen Jones, Workforce Investment Board
Doug Joyce
Gary Kenny
Justin LaFever
Patricia LaFever
Brittany Lampe
Patricia Miljan
Rain Miljan
Michael D. Parnell
Jaimie Shaver
William P. Talty
Linda Uselmann
Anne Wolfe
Margaret C. "Chris" Yaudas
Laela Zaidi

October 21, 2013

Hannibal LaGrange College

Diana Hennage
Jonah Barry
Tim Larrick
Marie Davis, MVATA and FFA
Dr. Jim Masters, Monroe City R-I School District
Bev Ehlen, Concerned Women for America of Missouri
Mike Lodewegen, Missouri Council of School Administrators
Michele Nunemacher
Chris Gaines
Emma Smith, National FFA–Mark Twain FFA
Kandace Tillitt

October 22, 2013

Northwest Missouri State University

Rob Dowis
Doug Dunham, Northwest Missouri State University
Steve Klotz

Dr. Regina Knott
Michael McBride
Dr. Joy Pivalar, Northwest Missouri State University
Mike Thomson
Dr. Tim Wall

University of Missouri - Kansas City

Aimee Alderman
James Caccamo
Marcie Calvin
Chere Chaney
Kimberly Chexnuyder
Amye J. Cooley
Mary Ellen DeCoursey
Andrea Flinders, Kansas City Federation of Teachers & School-related Personnel
Dr. Steve Green, Kansas City Public Schools
Joseph Jackson
Mayor Sly James
Gerard Kitzi, Kansas City Public Schools
J. Mike Kohfeld
Dwan Littlejohn
Tonya Long
Dwayne Martin
Bonnaye Mims
Kristi Odums
Janet Parks, MORE2
Anne Pritchett, Kansas City Federation of Teachers
Jack Wiley

October 23, 2013

University of Central Missouri

Tammy A. Bartholomew, MVATA
Brad Bromwell
Erin Brower, Alliance for Childhood Education
Susan Crooks, Leeton R-X School District
Julie K. Dill, Johnson County R-7 School District
John French
Shelley Holsten
Ryan Huff, Marshall Public Schools
Jenn Leyden
Jill Noble
Mary Beth Scherer
Chris Storms

Jaret Tomlinson
Stephanie Webber, Missouri PTA

Submitted written testimony
Mary Winters

University of Missouri - Columbia

Rusty Black
Mary R. Byrne, Ed.D.
Carley Esser
Jack E. Jensen, First Chance for Children
Nancy Knipping
Sherry Kuttenkuler
John Lannin
Teresa Maledy
Laura Martin
Tom Rose
Natalie Sales
Sophie Shore
Stacy Shore
Ron Swift
Deanna Thies, MVATA